Division of
International Services

Office of Research Services

Information for NIH Visiting Program Participants

National Institutes of Health
Office of Management

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Division of International Services

Office of Research Services

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Congratulations on your upcoming visit to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)! The NIH offers talented scientists throughout the world an opportunity to train and conduct biomedical research within the various Institutes and Centers (ICs) that comprise the NIH. Our office, the Division of International Services (DIS), Office of Research Services (ORS), assists foreign national scientists with navigating visa and immigration issues.

We designed the enclosed information to assist you and your family with making your plans to come to the NIH. It provides instructions on different items, such as how to apply for your visa and website resources. Before your arrival, read all items carefully and visit the DIS website (http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/Pages/default.aspx). Following this guidance will assist you with a smooth transition to the NIH.

The DIS wants to make your visit to the NIH professionally and personally rewarding. We encourage you to ask us questions. From all of us at the DIS, we wish you a successful and enjoyable stay in the United States!

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

Please refer to the **"Visiting Scientists"** section of the DIS website for detailed information about your visa classification, visa application process, entering the United States, and rules governing your continued stay: http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Pages/default.aspx.

Before booking your airline ticket to come to the U.S., wait until you have received your U.S. entry visa stamped in your passport. Keep your passport, invitation letter, and immigration documents with you in your carry-on baggage when entering the U.S. You will need to present them upon arrival to the U.S. Immigration Inspector. Do ***not*** pack them with your luggage.

When completing official U.S. Government forms (such as a U.S. visa application), please enter your name **exactly as it appears per the passport**. Having several forms with your name spelled differently can cause significant problems after your arrival to the U.S., so please be very careful!

IMPORTATION OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIALS

If you plan to bring biological materials to the NIH, it is ***very*** important that you obtain the necessary importation permits. The U.S. Public Health Service issues permits to authorize the importation of human biological materials, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture issues permits to authorize the importation of plant and animal materials.

Contact your NIH Laboratory/Branch Sponsor/Supervisor who can offer assistance to obtain the necessary permits to import any such materials through the NIH's Quarantine Permit Service Office, Division of Occupational Health and Safety, Office of Research Services, at 301-496-2960 or qpso@mail.nih.gov. Visit their website for more information: http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/sr/dohs/BioSafety/QPSO/Pages/import_permits_export_declarations.aspx.

CHECK-IN/ARRIVAL AT NIH

All NIH-sponsored foreign national scientists must check-in ("Enter-on-Duty" or "EOD") with the DIS no later than their first day of work in order to activate their award, appointment or assignment. By checking-in with the DIS, you give us your consent to access your and your dependents' Form I-94 Arrival/Departure record from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) I-94 retrieval website to facilitate your check-in. This consent will remain valid as long as you are an active participant at the NIH.

To check-in with the DIS, follow the box checked below:

- ❑ DIS check-in sessions are held every Monday morning (except in cases of U.S. Government closure), beginning promptly at 9:00 a.m. Information and procedures, including a list of documents to bring, are described at http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Pages/ComingtoNIH.aspx.
- ❑ An individual check-in appointment is required. Contact **your assigned** DIS Immigration Specialist to schedule an appointment.
- ❑ For those outside the local area surrounding the main NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland: Contact your IC "Key Contact" to schedule an appointment to process the check-in remotely. Information about "Key Contacts" is available further in this document under "NIH Administrative Information."

U.S. INCOME TAXES

U.S. income taxes are a levy on any income that you receive during your stay in the United States. Even if you do not receive income from a U.S. source, it may be possible that you could still be taxed on your world-wide income. Income taxes are assessed at a state and federal level. For those funded by the NIH, these taxes are generally deducted automatically from your NIH payment. However, those coming as Visiting Fellows may have to pay estimated state taxes directly to the state where you will reside. Each year, you must report your earnings on an annual tax report, known as an "Income Tax Return."

Please review the DIS website on taxes, which contains important information and links, at http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Pages/Taxes.aspx.

Information on the U.S. Social Security Number (SSN), which is used for tax reporting purposes, can be found at http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Documents/ssn_overview.pdf.

After your arrival at the NIH, you will be scheduled to attend a seminar devoted to income taxes. We strongly encourage your attendance! Some individuals may be eligible for exemption from certain U.S. taxes due to a treaty agreement between the U.S. and their country of "tax residence." If such a treaty applies in your case, a separate letter will be included in this package. Final determination of your eligibility and the duration of tax exemption will be determined upon your arrival to the NIH.

HEALTH INSURANCE

All visiting foreign national scientists at the NIH are required to have health insurance for sickness and accidents. For those sponsored as **J-1 Exchange Visitors**: J-1 regulations require specific insurance coverage for both J-1 **and** J-2 dependents. The requirements can be found from the Department of State (DOS) at http://j1visa.state.gov/participants/how-to-apply/eligibility-and-fees/. In addition, J-1 and J-2 dependents may also be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act or "ACA" (http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/rights/index.html). Failure to comply with health insurance requirements may result in termination of your program at the NIH.

- ❑ For **Visiting Fellows (Pre- and Post-doctoral)**: your sponsoring IC will pay the basic premium for health insurance coverage for you and dependents (spouse and/or unmarried children typically under age 21) with the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES)*. Information about the FAES insurance is available at http://www.faes.org. **J-1 Exchange Visitors**: FAES insurance meets J-1 and ACA requirements for health insurance. **Supplemental Fellows must check with their IC on payment of insurance.*
- ❑ For those in **NIH employee (full-time equivalent or FTE) designations**: if your FTE appointment is greater than 12 months, you are eligible (but not required) to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) that can cover you and dependents (spouse and/or unmarried children typically under age 21). Details about FEHB and other government benefits can be found at http://hr.od.nih.gov/benefits/. Contact your Human Resources office for more information and enrollment. If your appointment is 12 months or less, please refer to the information below for "all other designations." **J-1 Exchange Visitors**: FEHB plans meet ACA requirements, but do ***not*** contain all benefits required by J-1 regulations (that is, medical evacuation and repatriation of remains). These benefits, however, can be purchased from the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES). Contact the FAES for additional information and cost (http://www.faes.org/).
- ❑ **All other designations**: you may obtain health insurance from your home country or another U.S. private insurer. Alternatively, you may explore insurance options to cover you and dependents (spouse and/or unmarried children typically under age 21) through the Foundation for the Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES). Information about the FAES insurance and cost is available at http://www.faes.org. **J-1 Exchange Visitors**: make sure you review the DOS health insurance requirements before purchasing your insurance plan. You will need to bring an English summary of your insurance benefits from your insurance provider to confirm its compliance with J-1 regulations.

You must enroll with your applicable insurance provider within **30 DAYS** of your arrival to the NIH. If your family arrives to the United States separately, you must enroll your family with your insurance plan within **30 DAYS** of their arrival to the U.S.

Special note: The health insurance coverage provided by the NIH does not begin until **after** your arrival to the NIH. You should arrange for temporary, short-term insurance for yourself (and any dependents) for the period between departure from your home country to the start of your insurance at the NIH.

NIH ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

IC Key Contact

During your stay at the NIH, a designated individual from your IC will serve as your "Key Contact." This individual is responsible for assisting you with administrative matters, such as enrollment in NIH health insurance, stipend payments, NIH Identification (ID) Badge, etc. This individual also serves as a liaison with the DIS.

Funding

If your stay is funded by the NIH, please plan to arrive with enough funds to live on for at least one month. Allow two to four weeks for your first payment to be issued. Your stipend or salary is paid by your IC, not by the DIS. Contact your IC Key Contact for stipend payments or your Human Resources office regarding salary payments.

Terms and Conditions

The NIH Intramural Research Sourcebook (http://sourcebook.od.nih.gov/) provides a summary of policies governing the terms and conditions to conduct biomedical research at the NIH. Dependent upon your NIH designation, further terms and conditions of your NIH stay are outlined in various NIH policy chapters. The most common ones are:

- Visiting Fellows: http://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/person/2300-320-3/
- Special Volunteers and Guest Researchers: http://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/person/2300-308-1/
- Research Collaborators: http://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/person/2300-308-4/
- Employees/FTEs: http://hr.od.nih.gov/default.htm

Outside Work/Ethics

If you are sponsored by the NIH, immigration rules and regulations generally do not permit outside employment, work, or income. You may only work at the NIH as approved under your immigration status. NIH-sponsorship typically requires that you work full-time at NIH facilities.

All foreign national scientists—including those not sponsored by the NIH—must also abide by all applicable rules and regulations concerning your conduct at the NIH. Therefore, you may not accept outside employment or any compensation that results in a conflict of interest or even the appearance of such a conflict.

Review NIH ethics information, located at http://ethics.od.nih.gov/default.htm. For Visiting Fellows and other trainees, details on outside and NIH-related activities can be found at https://ethics.od.nih.gov/training.htm.

Life in the U.S.A.

Please visit our website to find information and resources about housing, leisure, transportation and NIH services. Our "Welcome to the DC Area" page (http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Pages/WelcometoDC.aspx) also provides extensive information about NIH services, transportation, health care, and a variety of other topics to help you adjust to life in the U.S.A.! The NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) also has a Moving Guide at https://www.training.nih.gov/resources/justarrived/.

Additionally, all of our foreign national scientists, especially those sponsored as **J-1 Exchange Visitors**, are strongly encouraged to explore the U.S. and partake of cultural activities available through the NIH and through their local community. For example, the NIH OITE (https://www.training.nih.gov/) and Fellow's Committee (https://www.training.nih.gov/felcom) offers numerous cultural, professional, and social activities.

We welcome you and wish you a successful and enjoyable stay at the NIH!

QUICK CHECKLIST

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

- ❑ Review "Information for Visiting Scientists" on the Division of International Services (DIS) website
- ❑ Enter name exactly as it appears on passport on all U.S. Government forms
- ❑ Obtain necessary importation permits for biological materials if you plan to bring these to the U.S.
- ❑ Review Health Insurance coverage requirements and options to ensure you will have, or get, coverage once in the U.S.

UPON ARRIVAL

- ❑ Check-in with the DIS on or before the first day of work
- ❑ Review check-in information on DIS website and bring all necessary check-in documents to the DIS
- ❑ Identify and contact your NIH Institute/Center (IC) "Key Contact" upon arrival at the NIH
- ❑ Enroll with applicable Health Insurance provider within 30 days of your arrival to the NIH
- ❑ Review NIH terms and conditions, as well as ethics information regarding outside work
- ❑ Engage in U.S. cultural activities!

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